

is hard for them to come up with the resources by themselves. But with Federal assistance it is possible.

Critics of this kind of approach say it is porkbarrel, more earmarks and Federal spending and, you know, these Senators, they are trying to put more money in their States for political reasons. Well, the fact is, this is Federal money earmarked for projects to avoid flooding, to protect homes, to protect neighborhoods, and to protect great national treasures such as Lake Michigan.

The reservoirs not only will help stop sewage overflows, but they are going to save homeowners money. Almost 75 percent of the residential lots in South Holland, IL, are now in a floodplain. That will be removed when the Thornton projects are complete. Completing these projects will save the homeowners in South Holland \$713,000 in annual insurance premiums.

A lot of those homeowners are struggling with property taxes now and getting a break on flood insurance is certainly good news. This is just one of the many examples of how the WRDA bill will save homeowners real dollars and protect their homes.

Another important feature of the bill for Illinois is increased lock capacity and improvements to the ecosystem of the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. The Mississippi River, of course, is a beautiful river, and father of all waters, and has many claims to historic and natural significance. But it also is an important avenue of commerce. This is the backbone of the waterway system of America. It transports \$12 billion worth of products each year, including over 1 billion bushels of grain to ports around the world. This efficient river transportation is vital to Illinois. Shipping by barge is inexpensive and helps keep our ports competitive. That is good for producers and good for consumers all over the world.

More than half of the Illinois annual corn crop and 75 percent of all U.S. soybean exports travel along the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. Shipping by barge is not only cost effective, but it has real environmental benefits. Barges operate at 10 percent of the cost of trucks, 40 percent of the cost of trains, they release far less carbon monoxide, nitrous oxide, and hydrocarbons, and barges use much less fuel to operate.

But the system of locks and dams along the Upper Mississippi that make travel possible is in desperate need of modernization. The current system was built 70 years ago and it needs to be repaired. Many of the older locks are only 600 feet in length. Most of the current barges are twice that length. That means these goods take twice as long to go down the river into the marketplace.

The override veto before us today will authorize \$2.2 billion for replacing and upgrading locks and dams, and—this is a critical part of it—\$1.7 billion for ecosystem restoration along the river.

We struck an agreement between those who want to use the river for commerce, and those who value it as a natural resource. We said, if we improve the locks and dams, we will put a comparable amount of money, \$1.7 billion, into restoring the river, the ecosystem of the Mississippi River. So I think that is a fairminded, balanced approach to what our Nation needs.

As we have seen in the tragedy that occurred along Minnesota's 35-W bridge, our country's infrastructure is aging and overburdened. The projects included in this bill are desperately needed to shore up our waterway system, a vital component of our national infrastructure.

Unfortunately, the President vetoed this bill last Friday. After years of trying to put this bill together, this President discovered his veto pen this year and decided he would start vetoing bills one after the other. This is the latest casualty. The WRDA veto override was passed by the House yesterday with an overwhelming vote, 361 to 54.

When the Senate originally considered the bill earlier this year, there were only five Senators who voted against it. In less than 1 week this Congress has come together to send the President a strong message that his fiscal priorities are misplaced and misguided. I do not understand how this President can ask us for \$196 billion to rebuild Iraq, and we ask for \$23 billion to put into rebuilding America's waterways, protecting the levees that could flood communities and doing things that are critical for our future, and the President says it is wasteful spending—wasteful if it is spent in America, not wasteful if it is spent in Iraq?

I fear the President gets up every morning in the White House and looks out the window and all he sees is Iraq. If he looked out that window, he would see America is out here too. It needs investment. A strong America begins at home. The Water Resources Development Act will build the infrastructure which will build the economy, creating good business, good-paying jobs, construction jobs that cannot be outsourced, jobs that will be filled by Americans getting decent wages and good benefits, taking them home to their families, building up the neighborhoods and communities that are the backbone of this great Nation.

The President does not see that. Oh, he can see \$196 billion for Iraq. He cannot see \$23 billion for America. I think he is wrong. By the vote yesterday in the House of Representatives, overwhelmingly they told him he was wrong. I hope we reach the same conclusion when this matter comes before us tomorrow. What was intended to be reauthorized every 2 years is now 5 years too late.

If we follow the President's lead, we will postpone this again, we will see locks and dams continue to deteriorate, bridges continue to fail, and people wondering why in the world this great Nation of America is not making

certain its infrastructure and backbone are strong enough to sustain economic growth.

It is time the President stopped using his veto pen for essential projects, programs like those in this bill, and in the appropriations bills that will be sent his way. I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bill to override the President's veto.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EMPLOYMENT NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT OF 2007

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, this great Nation has long stood for a commitment to justice and equal rights for all Americans. Opening the doors of opportunity to all who have something to contribute has been a key to America's success as the world's strongest economy, and as the world's most successful democracy. Our cultural diversity is a pillar of our strength, and the promise of equal rights is a fundamental freedom of our democracy. Today, the House passed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2007, which would further promote and protect our country's diversity and every American's civil rights by further protecting Americans from discrimination in the workplace.

This important legislation would prohibit workplace discrimination by making it illegal to fire, refuse to hire, or refuse to promote employees simply based on a person's sexual orientation. Currently, Federal law provides basic legal protection against employment discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, national origin or disability but not sexual orientation. Discrimination on the basis of certain personal characteristics has no place in any workplace or in any State, and it is long overdue for Congress to extend American employees these protections. This legislation has broad support not only from civil rights groups but also from leading American corporations, because they understand that there is no place for discrimination in our workplaces.

I commend the House for passing the Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2007, and I look forward to the Senate taking up this measure without delay.